

What do Surrey and Los Angeles have in common? By TWW team

This week, Philip Alston, a United Nation monitor on extreme poverty, was given a walking tour of “skid row” in Los Angeles. He was shown a shelter courtyard where dozens of people were setting up places to sleep on the concrete because there was no room inside. Then block after block he encountered people forced to survive on the streets, in one of the richest countries in the world where access to housing is not viewed as a human right.

Sound familiar?

Alston’s tour guide was General Dogon, an organizer with LA Community Action Network. Dogon criticized the city for its criminalization of poverty. “He said the street cleanings were designed to harass homeless people, accused police of confiscating their belongings and said skid row enforcement was aimed at driving the poor out of downtown.” (LA Times)

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General Dogon emphasized that there is no place for people to go who are forced out of the area, and suggested that the money spent on policing homeless people should be directed to building low-cost housing on lots owned by the city. Meanwhile, inside the halls of power, city politicians were putting a positive spin on the problems, asserting that their management of the crisis was working and solutions were currently in the works.

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In our fight for housing, we are not alone. And the message from the streets – from LA to Surrey – is the same: End poverty and homelessness, not manage it with cops and bylaw.



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**Homeless camp defeats Maple Ridge displacement application;
but now they are stuck outside for the winter
By Alliance Against Displacement**

MAPLE RIDGE, UNCEDED KWANTLEN AND KATZIE TERRITORIES

Last week, Anita Place tent city defeated the second application by the City of Maple Ridge for a Supreme Court injunction to break up their 7-month old camp. The City tried to spin their defeat as a decision to change course from their failed efforts to smash the camp with force, sabotage it with neglect, and displace it with legal action.

Residents of Anita Place believe the City has retreated in the face of the power of united and organized homeless communities. This victory shows that organized groups of homeless people can take over publicly owned private land and build collective sites of survival, support, self-determination, and political struggle against efforts by governments to displace them into isolated and life-threatening spaces.

However, while the victory against constant police and bylaw displacement and public stigma is significant, it is not the end-goal of Anita Place, which formed around the slogan “homes not shelters.” The camp demands 200 units of temporary modular housing and the construction of 200 units of permanent welfare-rate, resident-run social housing for all those who are homeless in Maple Ridge. The folks who are living at Anita Place tent city stand in solidarity with homeless people across the province in the fight for dignified housing, adequate healthcare and the necessary resources to ensure true human flourishing.



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